

(Typed name of person mailing correspondence)

Pursuant to Section 1.97 of Title 37 of the Code of Federal Regulations, and prior to the issuance of a first office action, record is hereby made of information the United States Patent and Trademark Office may wish to consider during examination of the above-entitled application which is being filed concurrently herewith under 35 U.S.C. 371. No representation is made or intended that a prior art search was conducted, or that no better art than that listed is available.

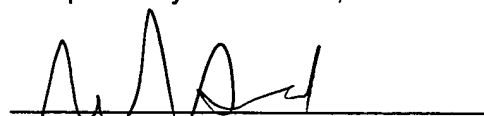
As this Information Disclosure Statement is being submitted prior to a first Office Action on the merits, it is respectfully submitted that no fee is required for consideration of this IDS.

Patent documents DE 29 19 462 A (corresponding to US 4,267,978) and DE-OS 22 12 816 (corresponding to US 3,849,232) were cited in the specification of the subject application, which serves as a statement of relevance for the non-English references.

Patent documents DE 29 19 462 A was also cited in the International Search Report of the corresponding International Application, along with US2001055548 (now US Patent No. 6,613,219), US 4,102,778 and US 5,882,610. A copy of the International Search Report, along with its English translation, which serves as a statement of relevance for any non-English references above, is attached hereto for the Examiner's convenience.

Copies of the above-noted foreign documents are enclosed herewith, along with Form PTO/SB/08A. It is requested that they be fully considered and made of record in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark A. Hixon', is written over a horizontal line.

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